
OPEN SPACE

GOAL

Provide an open space system which preserves existing canyons and hillsides throughout the community and reintroduces open space areas throughout the community as redevelopment occurs.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

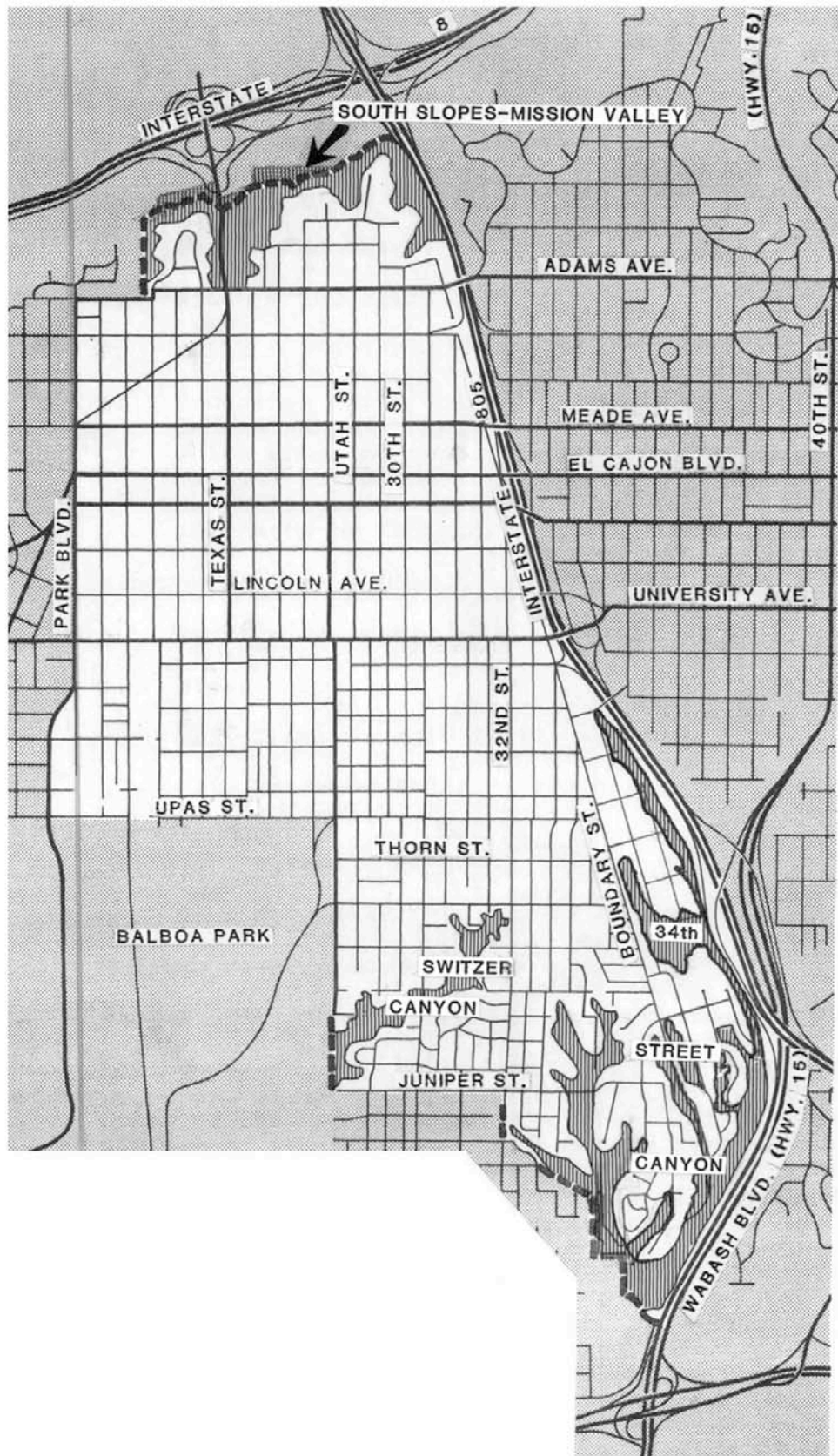
Open space in the Greater North Park community consists of hillsides and canyons. The neighborhoods of University Heights and Normal Heights are bounded to a certain extent by the south slopes of Mission Valley, which are currently designated as open space. Switzer Canyon, in the Burlingame and South Park areas, and the 34th Street Canyon, in the southeast section of the community near Greater Golden Hill, complete the open space system. Minor open space acquisitions have been accomplished on the Mission Valley slopes; major acquisitions are in process in the 34th Street Canyon; and the acquisition of Switzer Canyon is nearly complete (see **Figure 20**).

There are two forms of open space in Greater North Park. One is generally in slopes remaining after subdivision and development of land where the slopes are mostly undevelopable and owned by individual property owners. It is expected that they will continue to be privately maintained and protected. The other form consists of several large canyons which are unsubdivided or in large lots in single ownerships. These canyons are a notable part of San Diego's beauty and heritage. Every effort must be made to preserve and protect the integrity of these canyons and systems of canyons. They are among the few remaining wildlife habitats within the urbanized area of the City. Access for study and passive recreation should be allowed, but care must be taken to allow minimal disruption of the integrity of the canyons.

The purpose of this open space element is to ensure that open space conservation policies for the natural open space areas are well coordinated with adjacent land development. It is also the purpose of this element to ensure that the environmental and visual impact of upland development, as it relates to natural open space and public view presentation, is adequately addressed.

OBJECTIVES

- Preserve remaining undeveloped canyons and hillsides as important features of visual open space and community definition.
- Utilize publicly-controlled open space for passive recreation where feasible.
- Develop private, usable open space throughout the community by incorporating landscaped areas into new residential and commercial projects.



Natural and Undeveloped Open Space
Greater North Park Community Plan

20
FIGURE

- Acquire open space through open space easements and dedications or other mechanisms as part of project approvals.
- Coordinate open space conservation policies with adjacent land development.
- Establish requirements as part of development approvals for the rehabilitation of disturbed on-site open space.

Hillside Areas

Hillsides which have significant open space value are the highest priority in terms of preservation. They include any slope of 25 percent gradient or greater and the canyon bottoms. Only very low-residential development density should be allowed on these sites, not to exceed approximately one dwelling unit per acre (R1-40000). **Figure 6**, in the **Housing Element**, should be consulted as to those areas recommended for R1-40000 zoning.

Minimal disturbance of the natural terrain and vegetation should be permitted within the undeveloped portion of this zone, unless required due to the necessity to stabilize other areas of the site. Grading shall be avoided by using appropriate building types, such as split level or custom houses, to avoid the typical grading needed for flat slab construction. Building height shall not exceed 30 feet.

Any graded areas in these areas shall be revegetated with native vegetation to minimize erosion and soil instability and to enhance the undisturbed open space area. However, the use of native fire resistant and non-invasive species should also be encouraged directly adjacent to development.

Grading shall be avoided by using appropriate building types, such as split level or custom houses, thus avoiding the typical grading needed for flat slab construction.

Clustering of development is a technique that can be utilized to preclude or limit intrusions into sensitive areas. However, any project featuring attached dwelling units should be designed to be similar in scale and character with the surrounding neighborhood.

Remaining undeveloped portions of the hillside areas should be preserved through open space easements, open space lot designations, or non-building area easements.

Open Space Fire Prevention

The potential for brush fires peaks from May through October. Little rainfall, combined with summer heat and Santa Ana winds, can create an explosive condition.

The following measures should be implemented by property owners adjacent to open space areas.

Short Term

1. Thin out existing woody or dry vegetation.
 - a. Raise tree branch height - lower shrubs underneath trees.
 - b. Remove branches near structures.
 - c. Thin out shrubs on slopes - remove near trees.
 - d. Remove highly flammable plants.
2. Install irrigation at top of slope to establish a buffer.
3. Plant low-growing drought-tolerant fire retardant plants at top of slope.

Mid-Term

1. Extend buffer and continue thinning.

Long-Term

1. Irrigate top of slope buffer and keep vegetation below 24 inches in height.
2. Continually thin and clear slopes of dry plant material and debris.
3. Maintain and control vegetation near structures.
4. Plant fire retardant or resistant trees and plants in yard areas.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

1. Continue ongoing open space acquisition program in accordance with the criteria established by the Park and Recreation department.
2. Formulate implementing legislation regulating development in hillside and related areas.
3. Initiate a rezoning program within all designated open space areas utilizing the following guidelines:
 - a. Multifamily zoned properties should be rezoned to an appropriate single-family zone;
 - b. Large parcels should be rezoned to appropriate lower-density single-family zones; and,
 - c. City-owned open space should be rezoned to appropriate open space zones.
(Note: Reference should be made to the **Housing Element** for specific rezoning recommendations.)

4. For purposes of determining allowable density, any portion of a proposed Planned Residential Development which is designated open space and is in the Hillside Review (HR) Overlay District should be restricted to one dwelling unit per acre.
5. The development in natural canyon areas shall be limited to residential, or other low-intensity open space type uses. This should encourage open space preservation and allow property owners to have some reasonable development rights in the event the City or other government agency is unable to purchase the property.
6. All projects located within a hillside and canyon open space area should be subject to development review for the purpose of preserving the area's habitat and natural characteristics. Project review should be based on each project site's major features.

Refinements and modifications to recommended development regulations for open space and hillside areas may be incorporated into implementing legislation. In addition, it may be necessary to adjust land use and density boundaries in order to properly apply implementing zoning legislation. Finally, the achievability of recommended development intensities and residential densities may be predicated upon the design standards and development regulations of the implementing legislation.